

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

UNITED STATES AND WORLD CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12 STUDENT HANDOUT, LESSON 1

THEME: PARTICIPATION IS THE CORNERSTONE TO DEMOCRACY

The very word "democracy" supports the theme above. Broken apart, it means "the people" (Greek: Demos) "rule" (cracy). The essential role of the DEMOS (citizens) in our democracy has been discussed for centuries. We will examine what others before us have said about this theme.

In this lesson you will:

1. Analyze and discuss the thoughts of famous Americans on the subject of democracy and what role the people played in it.
2. Formulate your own views on critical questions surrounding self-government.
3. Discuss how citizens can correct and enhance their government in a democracy.
4. Learn some new Civics vocabulary.

ACTIVITY:

1. "...governments are instituted [created] among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." (Declaration of Independence)

- A. Explain, with examples, the ways that citizens have the ability to express their consent (or dissent) to decisions and actions made by governmental leaders at the school, city, county, state, and national levels.
- B. What are the key words in this passage from the Declaration of Independence?
- C. Who are the governed of whom the Declaration of Independence speaks?
- D. What is the relationship between "just powers" and "consent of the governed?"
- E. Offer and defend your explanation of why the authors of the Declaration of Independence chose to include the passage.
- F. What message is there in these words for each new generation to apply?

2. "There is no happiness without liberty, no liberty without self-government..." (The Federalist Papers, introduction by Clinton Rossiter)

Clinton Rossiter wrote these words in support of the creation of a political experiment, our nation. Support your responses to the following questions with examples, analogies, or evidence.

- A. Do you agree with Rossiter? Can citizens be just as happy without liberty? Can liberty exist without self-government?
- B. What might the connection be between liberty and self-government or between happiness and self-government? Can you cite any examples when loss of self-government resulted in a loss of liberty?
- C. Does self-government mean you will always be happy with governmental decisions? What is your reasoning?

3. "The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy." (President Woodrow Wilson)

- A. At first glance this may seem contradictory, a sort of paradox, but look closely. What could President Wilson have meant when he said this?
- B. How does this view correlate with the Declaration of Independence passage and the quote by Rossiter?
- C. Our democracy provides certain tools (means) to correct the problems it creates, for example: the right to petition the government for change in Amendment One; the right to run for Congress in Article One of the Constitution. What are at least two other tools in our democracy for implementing change in our leaders and laws? Be sure to look at the Amendments and at presidential powers in Article Two.
- D. Like any tools, these need someone to utilize them for there to be any results. In the vision of the authors of the Declaration of Independence and framers of our Constitution and government, who are the workers that use the tools?

4. "The science of government is my duty to study...that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy." (President Thomas Jefferson)

- A. Compare or contrast quotation four with views expressed in numbers one, two, and three. Does President Jefferson support or contradict the other views? Explain your reasoning.
- B. What would President Jefferson say to citizens who leave "politics" to others?
- C. He raises the word "duty;" what duty is he implying for all citizens? List all the duties you think should be assumed by each citizen to protect our rights and explain why?